

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 HA-02 EB-04 L-01 SP-02 OMB-01

TRSE-00 IO-06 EUR-08 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSC-05 /053 W

-----094576 241427Z /12

R 240615Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2997

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 GABORONE 2670

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, BC, RH

SUBJECT: ICRC ASSISTANCE TO CHILDREN IN BOTSWANA REFUGEE  
CAMPS

REF: STATE 211343

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY SHARES DEPARTMENT'S CONCERN OVER HANDLING OF CHILDREN IN BOTSWANA REFUGEE CAMPS, AND WE HAVE RECENTLY DISCUSSED SITUATION WITH PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR CHARLES TIBONE, BOTSWANA ICRC REP GYDA HUNTER, AND UNHCR RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVES. GOB CONTINUES TO AFFIRM ITS TRADITIONAL POLICY OF PERMITTING ALL REFUGEES, INCLUDING CHILDREN, TO DECIDE WHETHER TO REMAIN IN BOTSWANA OR RETURN TO RHODESIA WITH GOB TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE. HOWEVER, THERE NOW EXISTS NO EFFECTIVE MECHANISM FOR DETERMINING THE PREFERENCE OF INDIVIDUAL REFUGEES AFTER THEY HAVE ENTERED THE CAMPS, PRIMARILY BECAUSE  
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INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION OF CAMPS RESTS IN HANDS OF ZAPU. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THERE ARE SOME CHILDREN IN THE CAMPS WHO WISH TO CONTACT OR REJOIN THEIR PARENTS, BUT, DUE TO FEAR OF CHAOTIC CONDITIONS IN WARTIME RHODESIA, THE NUMBER IS PROBABLY NOT LARGE. END SUMMARY.

2. GOB VIEW: EMBOFFS VISITED PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY CHARLES TIBONE AUGUST 21 FOR DISCUSSION OF PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN IN CAMPS. TIBONE, WHO HAD JUST RETURNED FROM VISIT TO CAMPS, IT GOB'S EXPERT ON REFUGEE MATTERS AND HAS BEEN INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN DEVELOPMENT OF BOTSWANA'S REFUGEE POLICY. ACCORDING TO TIBONE, BOTSWANA POLICE SEEK TO INTERVIEW ALL ARRIVING REFUGEES BEFORE THEY ENTER CAMPS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO ENTER BOTSWANA UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH INDICATE THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN FORCED TO CROSS BORDER. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT DEPTH AND QUALITY OF INTERVIEWS HAVE DECREASED AS TOTAL NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA HAS RISEN TO NEARLY 12,000. IF, IN COURSE OF INTERVIEW, ANY REFUGEE INDICATES DESIRE TO RETURN TO RHODESIA, LOCAL GOB AUTHORITIES WILL PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION AND PROTECTION AS FAR AS BORDER.

3. WITH REGARD TO PROBLEM OF CHILDREN AND OTHERS ALREADY IN CAMPS WHO MIGHT WANT TO GO BACK, TIBONE TOLD US THAT LOCAL GOB OFFICIALS PERIODICALLY MAKE GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS OFFERING ASSISTANCE TO ANY REFUGEE DESIRING REPATRIATION TO RHODESIA. ACCORDING TO TIBONE, LAST SUCH GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE IN JUNE, BUT RESPONSE TO THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS HAS BEEN MINIMAL. TIBONE TOLD US THAT GOB WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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HAVE NO OBJECTIONS "IN PRINCIPLE" TO INDIVIDUAL SURVEY OF CAMP POPULATION BY ICRC OR SOME OTHER HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION. HOWEVER, GOB WOULD NOT, ITSELF, BE IN POSITION TO TAKE LEAD IN ORGANIZING SUCH SURVEY BECAUSE IT WOULD NOT WISH TO ANTAGONIZE REFUGEES BY BADGERING THEM TO GO HOME.

4. TIBONE CONCLUDED THAT BOTSWANA WELCOMES DECISION BY ANY REFUGEE TO RETURN HOME BECAUSE EACH REPATRIATION MEANS THERE IS ONE LESS WHO MUST BE CARRIED FOR IN BOTSWANA. HEC CITED GOB EFFORTS EARLIER THIS YEAR TO FACILITATE RETURN OF MAJORITY OF CHILDREN ABDUCTED FROM TEGWANI MISSION SCHOOL (GABORONE 0895), AND REPATRIATION OF LONG STRANDED SITHOLE SUPPORTERS (GABORONE 1445), AS EVIDENCE THAT GOB DOES NOT ALLOW POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS TO STAND IN WAY OF REFUGEES WHO WANT TO RETURN TO RHODESIA. IN FACT, GOB IS NOW TRYING TO CONTACT MUZOREWA THROUGH ICRC TO ARRANGE FOR REPATRIATION OF UANC SUPPORTERS WHO HAVE BEEN STRANDED IN SELEBI-PIKWE CAMP FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS. IN TIBONE'S OPION, NUMBER OF REFUGEES, INCLUDING CHILDREN, WHO MIGHT WISH TO RETURN IS

SMALL BECAUSE THEY HAVE LITTLE TO RETURN TO. THEY  
HAVE FLED CIVIL WAR AND TERRORIST ACTS BY BOTH SIDES,  
AND MOST CHILDREN HAVE EITHER LOST THEIR PARENTS OR  
DO NOT KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.

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5. ICRC VIEW: BOTSWANA ICRC REP GYDA HUNTER  
TOLD US THAT RED CROSS WOULD LIKE TO FULFILL ITS  
RESPONSIBILITIES BY FACILITATING REPATRIATION AND/OR  
CONTACT BETWEEN REFUGEE CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS.  
ACCORDING TO HUNTER, ICRC IS NOW UNABLE TO SURVEY  
CHILDREN IN CAMPS BECAUSE OF ZAPU OPPOSITION TO  
SURVEY. HUNTER TOLD US THAT ICRC HAS MADE SOME  
EFFORTS TO LOCATE SPECIFIC CHILDREN IN CAMPS IN  
RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FROM ICRC OFFICE IN RHODESIA,  
BUT THESE EFFORTS HAVE (REPORTEDLY) BEEN FRUSTRATED  
BY ZAPU ORGANIZATION WITHIN CAMPS. ACCORDING TO  
HUNTER, ON TWO OCCASIONS ICRC REQUESTED ZAPU ASSISTANCE  
IN LOCATING YOUNG BOYS INN CAMPS, BUT BOYS WERE THEN  
SENT OUT BY ZAPU ON FLIGHTS TO ZAMBIA BEFORE FOLLOW-  
UP COULD BE MADE. THESE INCIDENTS HAVE SERVED TO  
DETER MORE ICRC REQUESTS ABOUT CHILDREN IN BOTSWANA  
REFUGEE CAMPS.

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6. HUNTER'S COMMENTS ILLUSTRATE PERVASIVE ZAPU PRESENCE WITHIN CAMPS WHICH WOULD MAKE ORGANIZATION OF ANY GENERAL SURVEY OF REFUGEE ATTITUDES VERY DIFFICULT TO ACCOMPLISH. EVER SINCE CAMPS WERE ESTABLISHED GOB HAS HAD TO FACE PROBLEM OF HOW TO INSURE INTERNAL ORDER AS WELL AS ORGANIZATION OF REFUGEES FOR DAY-TO-DAY TASKS SUCH AS CAMP SANITATION, DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD, AND CAMPE HEALTH PROJECTS (SUCH AS INNOCULATION CAMPAIGNS). IN VIEW OF SHORTAGE OF GOB ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL AND LARGE NUMBER OF REFUGEES ACCOMMODATED, DECISION WAS MADE TO WORK WITH ALREADY EXISTING ZAPU ORGANIZATION WITHIN CAMPS. GOB CAMP ADMINISTRATORS HAVE SINCE RELIED ON LIAISON WITH ZAPU REPS WITHIN CAMPS WHO CARRY OUT CAMP POLICIES, BUT SYSTEM ALSO GIVES ZAPU SIGNIFICANT CONTROL OVER LIFE WITHIN CAMPS. FOR INSTANCE, ZAPU LEADERS WITHIN CAMPS NOW ARE ONLY SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON IDENTITY AND WHEREABOUTS OF ANY PARTICULAR REFUGEE AMONG THE 12,000 NOW ACCOMMODATED AT FRANCISTOWN, SELEBI-PIKWE AND DUKWE.

7. GIVEN THIS SYSTEM OF INTERNAL ORGANIZATION, NO EFFECTIVE SERVEY OF ATTITUDES AMONG CHILDREN OR REPARTRATION EFFORT COULD BE CONDUCTED WITHOUT ACQUIESCENCE OF ZAPU. ACCORDING TO HUNTER, ZAPU SHOWS NO WILLINGNESS TO BE HELPFUL AND, IN FACT, HAS FRUSTRATED ICRC EFFORTS TO REACH INDIVIDUAL REFUGEE CHILDREN. THIS BEHAVIOR REPORTEDLY PRECIPITATED APPROACH BY ICRC REGIONAL REP STEINAMAN (BASED IN LUSAKA) WHICH WAS PARTIALLY REPORTED PARA 1D, GABORONE 2504. HUNTER TOLD US THAT NKOMO FLATLY REJECTED STEINAMAN'S PLEA FOR INCREASED ACCESS TO REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA AND REPORTEDLY THREATENED TO RESCIND PER-

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MISSION FOR ICRC TO WORK IN CAMPS IN ZAMBIA IF RED CROSS PROJECT WENT FORWARD IN BOTSWANA. ACCORDING TO HUNTER, STEINAMAN DECIDED NOT TO TAKE ON NKOMO DIRECTLY BUT TO WORK THROUGH GOB AND FOREIGN EMBASSIES (ESPECIALLY UK HIGH COMMISSION) IN BOTSWANA TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT FOR ICRC EFFORT TO ASSIST CHILDREN TO COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS AND VOLUNTARILY RETURN TO RHODESIA.

8. UK HICOM HERE HAS ALREADY RECOMMENDED THAT ICRC

GO AHEAD WITH CAMP SURVEYS REGARDLESS OF ZAPU OPPOSITION; AND ICRC APPROACHES TO GOB HAVE PAID SOME DIVIDENDS. HUNTER TOLD US THAT GOB NOW HAS AGREED TO TURN OVER TO ICRC ANY REFUGEE WHO REQUESTS REPATRIATION AT TIME OF INITIAL INTERVIEW. THIS WILL ENABLE ICRC TO ARRANGE FOR SAFE TRANSFER OF REFUGEES AT RHODESIAN BORDER AND SOME FOLLOW-UP BY ICRC SALISBURY OFFICE TO MONITOR LATER RETALIATION AGAINST REFUGEES WHO DECIDE TO GO HOME. IN HUNTER'S VIEW, THIS SYSTEM WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER THAN CURRENT GOB PRACTICE OF SIMPLY TRUCKING REPATRIATES TO BORDER WHERE THEY WALK ACROSS INTO RHODESIA. ALTHOUGH THIS PROCEDURE WOULD APPEAR TO BE SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD, IT WILL NOT AFFECT SITUATION OF REFUGEES WHO HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS ONLY AFTER ENTERING ONE OF CAMPS. IN ORDER TO GET AT THIS PROBLEM IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO SOMEHOW REDUCE ZAPU CONTROL WITHIN CAMPS AND REPLACE IT WITH ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION. IF THIS COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED AND REFUGEES COULD MAKE CHOICE FREE OF INTIMIDATING ZAPU PRESENCE, HUNTER ESTIMATES THAT POSSIBLY 20 PERCENT OF REFUGEES WOULD ELECT TO RETURN TO RHODESIA.

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9. UNHCR VIEW: WE DISCUSSED ABOVE WITH RES REP

PERKINS AND DEPUTY MCCALLIN WHO AGREED WITH HUNTER ABOUT INHIBITING ZAPU PRESENCE AT FRANCISTOWN AND SELEBI-PIKWE BUT CLAIMED THAT ZAPU'S POWER IS NOT WITHOUT LIMITS. LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION CAMP ADMINISTRATORS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY REQUESTED REMOVAL OF SOME ZAPU LEADERS WHO HAVE CAUSED TROUBLE. HOWEVER, ZAPU THEN SIMPLY REPLACES THEM WITH NEW CADRES WHO CONTINUE WORKING WITH LWF ADMINISTRATORS IN RETURN FOR WIDE GRANT OF POWER WITHIN THE CAMP.

10. PERKINS AND MCCALLIN TOLD US THAT EVERY EFFORT IS BEING MADE TO ORGANIZE NEW DUKWE RESETTLEMENT CAMP WITHOUT PERVASIVE ZAPU INFLUENCE. UNLIKE SITUATION AT FRANCISTOWN AND SELEBI-PIKWE, ZAPU IS NOT PERMITTED TO HOLD MEETINGS AT DUKWE WITHOUT PRIOR PERMISSION OF LWF CAMP ADMINISTRATOR OR HIS DEPUTY (WHO IS FORMER BOTSWANA POLICE OFFICIAL).  
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MOREOVER, ZAPU ORGANIZERS FROM OUTSIDE DUKWE CAMP ARE NOT PERMITTED TO TRAVEL THERE WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL. ALTHOUGH ZAPU INFLUENCE AT DUKWE IS REPORTEDLY CONSIDERABLY LESS PERVASIVE THAN AT TRANSIT CAMPS, UNHCR ACKNOWLEDGES THAT PRICE HAS BEEN PAID IN EFFECTIVENESS OF CAMP ADMINISTRATION. FOR INSTANCE, THERE ARE NO ACCURATE LISTS OF REFUGEES ACCOMMODATED AT DUKWE, AND IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE ORGANIZATION HAS PROGRESSED ENOUGH TO PERMIT EFFECTIVE PROGRAM TO SURVEY REFUGEE ATTITUDES AND ASSIST ANY WHO MIGHT WISH TO GO BACK.

11. CONCLUSION: THE PROBLEM OF CHILDREN IN BOTSWANA'S REFUGEE CAMPS, LIKE SO MANY OTHERS IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTHERN AFRICA, IS FRAUGHT WITH COMPLEXITY AND MORAL AMBIGUITY. VIRTUALLY EVERYONE CONNECTED WITH THE PROBLEM, WITH THE CRUCIAL EXCEPTION OF ZAPU, WOULD LIKE TO SEE AN EFFECTIVE SURVEY OF REFUGEE ATTITUDES AND A SYSTEM OF FACILITATING REPATRIATION OF THOSE WHO WANT TO GO BACK TO RHODESIA. FOR ITS PART, WE BELIEVE BOTSWANA WOULD BE WILLING TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS AS LONG AS PROGRAM DID NOT INVOLVE LOSING ALREADY FRAGILE GOB CONTROL OVER 12,000 REFUGEES SPREAD THROUGHOUT NORTHEASTERN BOTSWANA. ACCORDING TO HUNTER, ICRC IS READY TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A SURVEY AND REPATRIATION CAMPAIGN AS SOON AS SITUATION WITHIN CAMPS APPEARS TO OFFER ANY HOPE OF SUCCESS. SINCE THERE APPEARS TO BE NO ALTERNATIVE TO ZAPU PRESENCE WITHIN CAMPS, THESE CONDITIONS CANNOT BE CREATED UNTIL ZAPU DROPS ITS CURRENT OPPOSITION TO SURVEY AND RE-

PARTIATION EFFORT. THE ONLY OTHER WAY A REPATRIATION  
CAMPAIGN CAN BE MOUNTED IS FOR ICRC TO OVERRIDE ZAPU  
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OBSTRUCTIONS AND CARRY OUT SURVEY DESPITE THEM. WE,  
THEREFORE, SUGGEST THAT DEPARTMENT AND GENEVA  
CONSIDER IMMEDIATE APPROACH TO NKOMO, AND ICRC, STATING  
IN STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS OUR ABHORRENCE OF CURRENT  
SITUATION AND URGING THEM TO QUICKLY PROCEED WITH  
REPATRIATION OF ANY REFUGEE CHILDREN WHO MIGHT WISH TO  
GO HOME.

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** SREF, BC, RH, ICRC  
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